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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001678

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/03/2017
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [ARABL](#) [EG](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: EGYPT, ARAB LEAGUE WANT COURTS MODERATES
INVOLVED VIA OTHER GROUPS

REF: A. SECSTATE 76012 (NOTAL)

[B](#). ADDIS ABABA 1549 (NOTAL)

[C](#). CAIRO 1380

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Poloff delivered ref A demarche on June 3 to both MFA Cabinet Advisor Ahmed Abu Zeid and Arab League Secretariat advisor Zeid Sabban. Abu Zeid said that Egypt

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supports including moderate members of the now defunct Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in reconciliation talks, preferably via clan or civil society affiliations. Abu Zeid said that Egypt was "not keen" on Sheikh Aweys' participation, given his terrorist designation, but questioned the criteria for labeling other CIC figures as "moderate." Sabban sought to distance the League from the CIC and Aweys, insisting that "there are no Courts" and that those not denouncing violence should have no role. Sabban detailed League monetary contributions for Somalia, and asserted that League members would meet on Somalia only if the upcoming National Reconciliation Congress fails to generate forward momentum. The GOE and Arab League understand that the CIC as an organization is no more, but may be flexible on including former CIC leaders in reconciliation talks. End summary.

Egypt: Involving CIC Moderates Via Other Groups

[2](#). (C) On June 3, poloff delivered ref A demarche to MFA Cabinet Staff Member Ahmed Abu Zeid, who, along with Egypt's ambassador in London, will represent the GOE at the June 5-6 London meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia. Discussing USG views on the now-defunct Council of Islamic Courts (CIC), Abu Zeid said that Egypt preferred to involve moderates affiliated with the former Courts via their clan affiliations or other civil society groups. He proposed additional "flexibility" toward former CIC members, however, should their exclusion as a group jeopardize the national reconciliation process. Acknowledging USG views on the CIC, Abu Zeid suggested the possibility of engaging these individuals informally, in parallel with the reconciliation process.

[3](#). (C) Poloff emphasized USG opposition to inclusion of Sheikh Aweys, Sheikh Sharif, and the leadership of the Al Shabaab militia in reconciliation talks. Abu Zeid said Egypt was "not keen" on Aweys' participation, grudgingly acknowledging his UNSC terrorist designation, but questioned the criteria by which other former CIC members were designated as "moderates."

Arab League: "There are no Courts"

¶4. (C) Poloff discussed ref A demarche separately on June 3 with Arab League Secretariat advisor Zeid Sabban, who, along with director of the League's African Affairs office Samir Hosni, will represent the League at the London ICG meeting. Sabban insisted that "there are no Courts," agreeing that former CIC members should participate in reconciliation talks under their clans or other civil organizations. Sabban agreed that those not renouncing violence and extremism should have no role, explicitly pointing to Sheikh Aweys. Sabban warned against "making the mistake" of thinking that all Hawiye are extremists since the CIC had strong links to the Hawiye.

League Financial Commitments for Somalia

¶5. (C) Sabban explained that the League monetary allocations for Somalia: \$1 million for the AU to manage AMISOM operations, \$1 million for disarmament, and \$1 million for the UNDP. The League also approved a further \$1 million for Secretary General Amre Moussa to spend on reconciliation.

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Sabban bemoaned lack of funding as the biggest obstacle to getting more AU troops on the ground for AMISOM, though he acknowledged that the unstable security situation is also a concern. He suggested that the UN should provide more funding for AU peacekeepers, and that the League may approach the USG and AU bilaterally on setting up a UN fund for Somalia.

League Praises Reconciliation Congress

¶6. (C) Sabban praised the upcoming mid-June National

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Reconciliation Congress as a "Somali initiative." Sabban hoped that a "father figure for Somalia" might emerge out of it, someone who could effectively liaise with all Somali parties and the international community; Sabban cited specifically Ali Mahdi, head of the reconciliation conference. Sabban blamed recent Transitional Federal Government (TFG) inaction for lack of progress on reconciliation thus far, citing TFGers' fears of losing power. The League was hoping to send a representative to the conference, but was concerned about security in Mogadishu. The League was in the process of replacing its Nairobi-based ambassador to Somalia; the replacement, said Sabban, should be in place in Nairobi before the Congress opens and would be available to represent the League.

¶7. (C) Sabban said that League member states would not meet in Jeddah unless the Congress failed to generate momentum for reconciliation. In that case, said Sabban, they will convene, and look for a new way forward in conjunction with the AU, IGAD, UN, and EU.

Comment

¶8. (C) The GOE and Arab League recognize that the CIC is no more, and as a group should not play a major role in Somali reconciliation. That said, they are sympathetic to the public support that the Courts previously enjoyed, and which may be fueling continued violence in Somalia. As we have heard from European Somalia envoy Jean-Christophe Belliard, the GOE and League may be flexible on engaging former CIC leaders - including Aweys - if they believe it will assist in stable reconciliation (refs B/C). Additionally, we note that Egyptian decisions on Somalia policy lie with the Egyptian

General Intelligence Service (EGIS), rather than the MFA.
Nevertheless, the June 5-6 ICG meeting in London will provide
a good opportunity to flesh out specifics on GOE and League
views toward including former CIC members.
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